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## ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years, international and bilateral assistance and funding agencies have become increasingly involved in evaluation activities in adult and nonformal education, especially in developing countries. The adult education field pioneered many approaches now advocated by specialists in program and project evaluation. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, United States agricultural extension specialists did extensive studies on farmer extension practices. In the 1950s and 1960s, international efforts began to build on some of the earlier agricultural extension concepts. Needs assessments, evaluation of adult education booklets, and evaluation of UNESCO adult education, literacy, and reading materials were all conducted. The UNESCO Experimental World Literacy Program conducted 11 projects in the late 1960s to mid-1970s that had built-in evaluation systems. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the governing bodies of most international organizations stipulated more evaluative efforts to provide data on the impact of various organizational activities. Such evaluation efforts sensitized project and program personnel in international agencies and in national governments to the need for participatory evaluation specifically to improve projects and programs. (A list of references is appended.) (YLB)

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EVALUATION OF ADULT NONFORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS:  
AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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In education, until recent years, the term "evaluation" has been exclusively identified with the measurement of student achievement. In the sixties and seventies, however, the notion of project and program evaluation has gained momentum, largely because of the increasing pressures from legislative bodies of nations and governing bodies of national and multi-national organizations to account for funds invested in education.

By the eighties, literature on project and program evaluation was vast. Scholars in every social science discipline from economics to anthropology, sociology and psychology and in professions from education to public administration to social communications have been involved in attempts at conceptualizing what evaluation is and should be all about. If there is any consensus among practitioners it is that evaluation can mean many things to many people.

The most general (and perhaps useful) description of evaluation is that it is the collection of information useful in decision making, but there are those that also so define educational planning <sup>Spaulding 1974, 1979</sup> (Spaulding 1974, 1979). This would suggest a close symbiosis between evaluation and planning. Evaluative activities, in such a context, involve collecting information useful in project and program design ("needs assessment" and "institution building" analyses); useful in making mid-course corrections when the project is underway ("formative evaluation"); and useful at the end of the project or at certain major periods

in a program when cumulative information of summary nature would be useful to policymakers and administrators ("summative evaluation").

Other distinctions in various definitions suggest a difference between "norm-referenced" evaluation whereby a program is compared to standards previously set and "criterion-referenced" whereby a project is examined on the basis of whether or not it is reaching objectives it has set for itself (Werdelin 1977). More recently, evaluation specialists are suggesting "qualitative" or "naturalistic" evaluation approaches, as opposed to the highly structured, quantitative designs advocated by a number of economists and educational researchers grounded in econometric and controlled experimental studies (Guba 1981, Patton 1975, Kinsey 1981, Clark and McCaffery 1979). The "qualitative" approach generally stresses participation of all those involved in project and program activity and is thus often called "participatory evaluation." This section will trace the involvement of international and bilateral assistance and funding agencies and groups in evaluation activities in adult and non-formal education and will concentrate on activities in developing countries. No attempt will be made to catalogue evaluation efforts, but rather to identify trends and suggest selected references. Purely domestic evaluation activities, such as those funded in the United States by the National Institute of Education and other groups, are not included as these are well covered in other standard references such as the Encyclopedia of Educational

Research of the American Educational Research Association.

# 1. Early Evaluation Efforts in Adult Education

A case can be made that the adult education field, broadly defined, has pioneered many of the approaches now advocated by specialists in program and project evaluation.

In the twenties and thirties, agricultural extension specialists in the United States did extensive studies on the effect of various extension practices on farmers. Generally speaking, such studies indicated that farmers are most likely to change practices when they see a demonstration of a technique on a farm similar to their own. Publications, radio programs, and face-to-face visits of extension workers reinforce efforts to change farming practice, but these various techniques in themselves <sup>often</sup> missed the mark because the change agent lacked an understanding of what the farmer already knows, thinks, feels, and does. Agricultural education specialists early practiced what would now be called "formative evaluation" when they tried out extension publications in order to see what farmers could read with ease, what words farmers know and use and which ones are used only by agricultural specialists, etc.

In the fifties and sixties, a number of international efforts began to build on some of the earlier agricultural extension concepts. UNESCO's Regional Center for Fundamental Education in Latin America (CREPAL), established in Patzcuaro, México, built into its training program various experiences involving the collection of information on the rural population

to be served by adult education activities. Such approaches later would be called "needs assessment" and would be considered important as an element of "formative evaluation."

Also in the fifties, the Organization of American States (OAS), through its secretariat, the Pan American Union, established the Latin American Fundamental Education Press, a program involving the preparation and try-out of a series of adult education booklets designed for adults of limited reading ability in Latin America. This series included booklets in health, agriculture, civics, recreation, and other areas considered at the time important in Latin American development. The series was pretested in a number of Latin American countries by surveying reading interests in village and urban areas; working with a sample of adults in various socio-economic settings to see what they could read, understand and remember of the booklets being prepared; and evaluating the effect of various formats (e.g., illustrations and captions with text) on interest and comprehension. (Spaulding and Nannetti in Richards 1959).

During the same period, the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Sciences, headquartered at Turrialba, Costa Rica, embarked on a series of activities, in cooperation with the OAS, involving research and training in agricultural communications. Again, the emphasis was on "needs assessment" (finding out about the conditions in the communities to be served), on "formative evaluation" (pretesting and trying out extension approaches and materials), and on "summative evaluation" (doing follow-up

studies to ascertain what had happened as a result of the program). These early efforts led to the establishment of a formal department of agricultural communications at La Molina Agricultural University in Perú, which has taken regional leadership in training and research in this area.

UNESCO work in adult education, literacy, and reading materials for the new literate during the fifties and sixties stressed various kinds of evaluative approaches, often described then as "topic testing," "pretesting," "posttesting," "study of the environment," etc. (Spaulding 1958). In 1957, UNESCO held a regional seminar on reading materials for new literates in Rangoon, Burma, which entailed the collection of information on village needs, writing and pretesting of reading materials, and evaluation of the impact of such materials. In 1956, a similar regional meeting was held in Murree, Pakistan, which outlined evaluation and research needs in the area of reading materials and literacy programs (Richards 1959). UNESCO, the Ford Foundation and other international groups assisted during the fifties a number of national programs involved in the creation and evaluation of adult education literature. Among these were the East African Literature Bureau, the Burma Translation Society, the Bureau of Ghanaian Languages, and the Marbial Valley Project in Haiti. The East African Literature Bureau, headquartered in Nairobi, was the host, in 1962, of a UNESCO-sponsored regional workshop on the preparation of reading materials for new literates which included authors, editors, publishers, and artists from both

English- and French-speaking African countries. Participants formed teams and worked in village areas to identify needs as felt by villagers and community development experts. They then designed reading materials which were tried out in villages, revised, and duplicated.

## 2. The UNESCO Experimental World Literacy Program.

In the mid-sixties, UNESCO proposed massive support for an experimental world literacy program, designed to combine social and economic skills training with traditional communication skills training. The United Nations Development Program (the usual source of support for such projects within the UN system) was approached to help finance the effort, but the UNDP was distinctly cool to the idea. Although economists had begun to treat formal education as investment rather than consumption, development thinking at that time had not made a strong case for investment in literacy and adult education. UNDP finally agreed, however, to finance several pilot, experimental projects, on the condition that UNESCO would build into each project an elaborate evaluative system designed to show how each project affected the behavior of individuals and communities involved in the functional literacy programs (Spaulding 1966).

Ultimately, 11 experimental projects were funded under the experimental effort, most of them becoming operational in the late sixties and terminating by the mid-seventies. Despite the efforts to design comparable evaluative procedures in each project beforehand, the local context of each project was such that

few comparable data were collected. Political problems plagued the effort in that most governments wished a national literacy effort rather than a pilot experimental project. Some projects separated evaluation from program development, and the evaluator (usually a social scientist) kept his or her distance from the operational staff, while others considered evaluation to be more of a formative variety, with the evaluator collecting data to be shared with program developers in order to help improve the project as it progressed.

In the mid-seventies, UNESCO established at headquarters in Paris an "evaluation unit" which labored without success for some months in an attempt to integrate incomparable data of the 11 literacy projects into some kind of comparable reporting design. Finally, two educators were invited to examine each case, to summarize the findings of each, and to report on trends that were evident between and among cases. The result was a joint UNDP/UNESCO report which was generally well-received by the scholarly community, but was somewhat controversial within UNESCO because of its unbiased reporting of the problems as well as the successes of the experimental program (Spaulding and Gillette 1976).

The report looked at the political and policy problems that plagued the various projects; the administrative and organizational problems; the staffing problems; the cost of the projects; the nature and effectiveness of the teaching materials and methods used; and the apparent effect on people and communities. Essentially, the report highlights the complexity of any attempt

to make major changes in an adult population through any one adult education or literacy effort; the need to adjust any such program to local conditions; the need to get policy-level support at the highest levels for success of any program; and the need to integrate such efforts into broader development plans. In terms of changed behavior on the part of participants, the adults in the various projects would adopt new practices only if they did not take much time, effort, or resources to accomplish.

### 3. Current Evaluation Activities

During the seventies and early eighties, the governing bodies of most international organizations called for more evaluative efforts in order to provide data which shows the impact of the various activities of the organizations. Both UNDP and UNESCO established offices of evaluation which, in turn, undertook to jointly evaluate a number of educational projects. UNESCO published guidelines on project evaluation to help short-term consultant teams brought in to do mid-term project evaluations (UNESCO 1979) and a manual on how to do structured evaluations of literacy programs (Couvert 1979). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established, in October 1979, a major division for project evaluation which has produced a remarkable series of reports on various USAID-assisted projects in rural education, rural development and related fields, most with adult education components (i.e., Giovanni, Armstrong and Jansen 1981).

USAID has also supported a variety of evaluation efforts through contracts with universities and consulting agencies. The Stanford University Institute for Communications Research and <sup>the</sup> Academy for Educational Development undertook a series of evaluative studies of the out-of-school education efforts in the Ivory Coast, a program linked to a major television-based primary school reform in that country (Grant and others n.d.).

USAID has also funded the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts which has developed collaborative non-formal education programs in a number of countries, most with evaluative approaches built into the programs (Kinsey 1978, 1981). World Education, Inc., in New York City, has pioneered in needs assessment and participatory evaluation approaches in non-formal education in a number of countries and has similarly received USAID support (E.A., Farmer and Papagiannis 1975). USAID, for a number of years, supported work at Michigan State University which included a Clearinghouse on Non-Formal Education within which a number of project reports and evaluative studies have been deposited (Non-Formal Information Center 1981). In 1976, USAID <sup>funds</sup> helped establish the Institute for Development Anthropology at Binghamton, New York, which has as its goal the application of social sciences in development work. It has undertaken a number of evaluative studies for USAID of rural and community development efforts (Institute for Development Anthropology 1981).

Major studies funded by USAID and others include a three-year effort by Florida State University to evaluate the extensive

work of Acción Popular Cultural (ACPO) in Colombia. ACPO, over the years, has evolved a radiophonic education effort which includes publications, volunteer monitors in many villages, and a variety of adult education activities which are supported by the communications infrastructure. The complexity of developing and managing such a program and attracting continuing interest of participants has been highlighted in this study (Bernal, Masoner, and Masoner 1978, Morgan Muhlmann and Masoner 1980).

USAID also initiated in the early eighties a major demonstration of the uses of satellites to improve communication in rural and community development. This effort will have a major evaluation component. Liberia is the location of the first of several country projects, each of which emphasizes the role of communication in adult education. This effort is consistent with an increasing concern of a number of funding agencies for the integration of adult education services into comprehensive community development efforts (Coombs 1980).

The World Bank has an office which undertakes evaluations of projects funded by the various regional bureaus of the Bank, but most of these "audits" are for internal use only and are not made public. Recently, however, the Bank began to encourage borrowing nations to build into each project it funds a continuous evaluation system which will provide information useful in improving project performance as it progresses as well as cumulative information to help in the ultimate summative evaluation of the effort. The first such built-in feedback evaluation

mechanism, to cost several million dollars over a seven-year period, was developed in Papua New Guinea in 1980 as part of a primary education reform loan (which also included a small adult education component). An earlier such evaluation effort in a Bank-supported project in Pakistan was abandoned.

The Bank, in the mid-seventies, assisted the Saudi Arabian Government in a major evaluation of their adult education and literacy efforts, with the help of faculty from the International and Development Education Program of the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Linköping in Sweden, Ain Shams University in Cairo, World Education, Inc., and other groups. This led to a major revision of the curriculum and materials used in the Saudi program, but the Saudi Government has never released the various evaluative and research reports prepared during the project.

The Canadian International Development <sup>Agency</sup> ~~Authority~~ (CIDA) has participated in a variety of evaluation efforts, often in cooperation with the International Council for Adult Education in Toronto and the International Development Research Centre in Ottawa (International Council for Adult Education 1979). The Swedish International Development Authority has similarly funded a variety of adult education projects with an evaluative component, including one to train adult educators in Portugal undertaken by the University of Linköping (Erasmie, Norbeck 1978). The Overseas Development Authority in the United Kingdom has funded a number of such overseas projects, especially through the University of Reading, which has a long-standing interest in agricultural and

rural development (Bowers 1977).

Finally, a joint UNESCO-UNICEF program of studies has issued an extensive series of reports which includes evaluative material on a variety of non-formal projects and programs for children, youth and women. And the UNESCO Regional Office in Asia hosts the Asian Program for Educational Innovation and Development (APEID) which has networked a number of institutions involved in evaluative studies of educational innovation in the region.

#### 4. Institutional Evaluation Policies

As can be seen from the selective review, above, most international evaluation efforts in non-formal and adult education have been motivated by multi-national and bilateral funding and assistance organizations. As yet, however, there is little agreement among and between agencies and governments as to what evaluation is all about.

Some in the agencies see evaluation as an exercise whereby "experts" are sent for a few days or weeks to look at a project in progress to decide whether or not it is meeting its objectives and whether or not any changes are needed in the project plan. Governing boards of international and funding organizations, in turn, see evaluation as a means of providing data to help them set priorities as to what should be funded in the future. National governments, project administrators and groups involved in projects, however, are more attracted to the idea of evaluation as a kind of management information system which can help pro-

vide data for ongoing improvement in project management and design.

The picture is further complicated by the internal structures of international and funding organizations. Within the operational arms of many organizations, in-house evaluators (sometimes called "inspectors general" or "auditors") are often viewed as meddlers. If the evaluation unit of the organization is not placed at a high enough level in the organization, and given sufficient resources, autonomy and authority to do its work, its work will be limited and its information will be little used in policy making and operational decisionmaking.

Perhaps more importantly, evaluation efforts, to be effective in improving program and project performance, must be built into program and project activities with the idea of helping answer questions which participants have. External evaluations done by evaluation specialists may serve a function, but until evaluation is a state of mind shared by all participants in a program, evaluation results will be less than fully effective. For this reason, a major function of any in-house evaluation unit should be to help operational units within the organization in the design of their own self-evaluation efforts.

##### 5. The Future

The past two decades have sensitized project and program personnel both in international agencies and in national governments to the need for evaluative data on project and program activities. With increasing interest world-wide in non-formal

and adult education, there will be increasing interest in evaluation efforts designed to provide information for the constant improvement of projects and programs. Evaluation models will increasingly stress participation of the target audiences of non-formal and adult education efforts. Such participatory evaluation in itself will be a powerful adult education medium, consistent with current priorities on the development of community-based non-formal education efforts reflecting the needs and interests of local communities.

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